

BS

580

E4 S6











*Life of Elijah,*

**NABOTH'S VINEYARD.**

THE

LIFE OF ELIJAH.

---

BY THE REV. DANIEL SMITH,  
OF THE NEW-YORK CONFERENCE.

---

“Elijah with his mantle smote the flood,  
And Jordan's hastening waves divided stood;  
The fiery chariot, on the farther shore,  
Deathless to heaven th' ascending prophet bore.  
'My father!' cried Elisha, as he flew,  
'See Israel's chariot, and his horsemen too;'  
Then with the mantle, as it dropp'd behind,  
Came down a power like mighty-rushing wind,  
And, as he wrapt the trophy round his breast,  
Elijah's spirit Elisha's soul possest.” *Montgomery.*

---

1871  
NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY T. MASON AND G. LANE,

For the Sunday School Union of the Methodist Episcopal Church,  
at the Conference Office, 200 Mulberry-street.

J. Collord, Printer.

1839.

BS580  
.E4S6

“Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1839, by T. Mason and G. Lane, in the Clerk’s Office of the District Court of the Southern District of New-York.”

39 00



THE  
LIFE OF ELIJAH.

118

CHAPTER I.

Prophets—Elijah—Character of Ahab and Jezebel—  
Elijah's message—Wickedness of Israel—Elijah flees  
from Ahab—Fed by ravens at the brook Cherith.

AMONG the ancient Israelites were a particular kind of ministers, called prophets. They were generally men who neither possessed nor cared for the riches, honours, or pleasures of this world; they usually lived in retired places; though being greatly esteemed by good kings, they sometimes resided at court. They were distinguished for the holiness of their lives; their zeal for God and the true religion; and their opposition to injustice, oppression, idolatry, and every

species of irreligion. They espoused the cause of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, against their oppressors; and they fearlessly remonstrated with the nobles of the land, and even with kings, for their violations of the law of God. They were God's chosen messengers to counsel kings to enforce his laws and worship, and to oppose national vice and error. They were often endowed with the power of foreseeing future events; and were commissioned to forewarn the people of coming judgments and calamities. In the discharge of their duty they were firm and undaunted; even death in its worst forms could not deter them from delivering the messages with which God had intrusted them. These prophets were continued among the Israelites for many centuries in a regular succession. They delivered predictions on many occasions and on

a great variety of subjects ; some of which were fulfilled immediately, others after the lapse of centuries, and some are even now fulfilling.

Among these holy ministers was the Prophet Elijah ; he was called Elijah the *Tishbite*, probably from the name of the place where he was born or lived. We are not informed in what year he was born, nor who were his parents ; but his birth must have occurred a little more than nine hundred years before the birth of the Saviour ; or more than two thousand seven hundred years since. He is first introduced to our notice as a messenger of God to Ahab, the wicked king of Israel.

I must here pause in the history of Elijah to give you some account of Ahab and the people over whom he reigned. After the twelve sons of Jacob had become a great nation, and

had been led out of Egypt by Moses, and into the land of Canaan by Joshua, they were first governed by judges: finally, wishing to be like other nations, they asked of God, through Samuel the prophet, to give them a king. Saul was the first king, and David his successor; the next was Solomon, and after him Rehoboam. This last king, being inexperienced, and not any too wise, and showing a disposition to follow rash counsels, and oppress his people, ten tribes revolted from him, and appointed Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to be their king. Jeroboam was a wicked king. The tribes of Israel had been accustomed to worship in the magnificent temple at Jerusalem, which Solomon had built: this temple was in the possession of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, who still continued under Rehoboam. Jeroboam, fear-

ing if the people under his government went to Jerusalem to worship at the three great annual feasts,—the feast of the passover, the feast of pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles,—they would conclude to go back under the king of Judah, determined to set up a sort of opposition worship in Israel; he therefore made two golden calves, and set them up, one at Bethel and the other at Dan, and commenced seducing the people from the worship of the true God into idolatry. From this time the people, following their wicked king and his wicked successors, waxed worse and worse, until true piety appeared almost rooted out of the nation. Ahab was one of the successors of Jeroboam; he reigned twenty-two years, and held his court at Samaria: he married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Zidon; she was a gross idolater, and a most

cruel and blood-thirsty woman : she introduced the worship of Baal, which seems to have superceded, during the reign of Ahab, that of Jeroboam's golden calves. Ahab, though better instructed, followed her in all her abominable idolatry ; and they together became the curse and scourge of the nation. The sacred historian tells us Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that went before him.

We will now return to the Prophet Elijah. The Scriptures introduce him as addressing Ahab, saying, " As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word."

Probably he had before warned Ahab, and reproved him for his wickedness ; and the people of Israel, who were not obliged to sin because their rulers did, had doubtless received

many reproofs from God ; still they disregarded them ; the law of God, which had been given amid thunders and lightnings, and the quaking of mount Sinai, was forgotten, or remembered only to be trampled upon. The dreadful judgment of the flood ; the thousands slain for their idolatry in the wilderness ; and all the threatenings against sin, uttered by Moses from the mouth of God, were unheeded. And, as

“A foe to God was ne'er true friend to man,”  
so justice and mercy, between man and man, had fled from Israel. The strong bore down and destroyed the weak ; the cry of the widow was lost amid the uproar and madness of the times ; the orphan had no protector, and the innocent were a prey to the guilty.

In what a horrid state is a nation which has forsaken God ! We have

a picture of this in modern times. France denied the God of heaven ; its rulers pronounced death to be “an eternal sleep ;” shut its churches ; overthrew its altars, and scoffed at the Bible. The consequence was, that the whole nation seemed transformed into a horde of lawless savages ; and the country, deluged in blood, appeared converted into one vast slaughter-house. Innocence itself was treated as a crime ; tens of thousands perished by violence ; the nations looked on aghast, and wondered at the depravity of human nature.

In the midst of even such times, God often raises up some faithful and true witnesses, who, unawed by the boldness of vice, openly testify against it ; such was the Prophet Elijah. He loved his God and his country, and seeing both dishonoured by sin, and knowing that desperate diseases re-



quire strong remedies, he prayed to God to vindicate his own worship and honour; he asked him to cure the people by judgments. His prayer was answered; and he was sent to Ahab with the alarming tidings that the bottles of heaven should be stopped; and there should not be "rain nor dew."

Do you suppose Ahab believed this message? By no means. We may suppose, as the prophet utters it, he casts his eye abroad over the spreading landscape before him; the fields are clothed with grain, gently waving as the zephyrs blow over them; the fig-trees are laden with delicious fruit, and the olive-trees are even now bending under their load. The lily of the valley and the rose of Sharon are in bloom: the towering palm-trees, rising like a beautiful colonnade, around the springs and beside the rivulets, are ornamented with their crown of dark

green leaves ; the cattle are grazing upon the hills ; and all nature wears an aspect of freshness and beauty.

The eye of Ahab returns from its excursion, and falls scornfully upon the prophet ; his lip is curled with contempt ; abusing present mercies to encourage himself in continued sin, his countenance seems to say, “Behold all this ! Why has not God *already* dried up the springs and parched the earth with drought ?”

Elijah retires in silence. God, the God of Elijah, well knows that Ahab is capable of any dark deed which the blood-thirsty Jezebel may suggest ; he therefore says to Elijah, “Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.” “So he went and did according to the word of the Lord ; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.”

Here Elijah finds himself in a most solitary situation : he is far from the habitations of men ; there is no voice of friend to beguile the hours ; he has no roof to shelter him from the scorching rays of the sun, or the cool winds of evening. His slumbers are broken by the howling of beasts of prey at night,—by day the wild goat leaps from crag to crag along the precipices ; the conies peep out of their holes, and gaze upon the strange form that has unexpectedly appeared amid their rocks. The brook goes dancing on its way ; and the hoarse croaking of the raven mingles with the murmur of the stream. Here, in this deep solitude, you might suppose the prophet must be very unhappy. But no, it is quite otherwise : if he is sad at all, it is, when as a patriot and a prophet, he is musing on the sins and calamities of Israel. For himself he is not lone-

ly—God is with him: though Ahab and Jezebel hunt for his precious life, he does not fear them; Jehovah is his protector. He is not comfortless; for he communes with the fountain of happiness. But how is he to obtain a supply for his daily wants? He has no fields of grain, or vines, or olive-yards: we do not learn that there were even “locusts or wild honey” here. There is no friend to steal away from the watchful spies of Ahab by night, and bring him bread; and if he stirs in search of it, he is exposed to be hunted down as though he were the common enemy of mankind. But he is God’s servant, and there is no lack of means with him.

There are the ravens—birds of a solitary disposition, disposed to seek out provisions to carry to their places of abode, and delighting to live about brooks of water—these, or any thing

else, are God's instruments, when he pleases to employ them. He can as well commission them to bring bread and meat to the prophet, as use clay to open the eyes of one born blind. So the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

## CHAPTER II.

The brook Cherith dries up—Elijah is sent to dwell with a widow of Zarepheth of Zidon—Himself and the family of his hostess are sustained by a miracle—The son of the widow dies, and Elijah restores him to life—The widow believes God.

EVERY source of earthly comfort will in time run dry ; but they who trust in the all-sufficient God will find living waters of consolation that never fail.

According to Elijah's prediction, there is "no rain nor dew;" the reservoirs in the mountains are gradually exhausted ; the springs that gushed from the sides of the hills are no longer fed from these fountains ; they fail, and the brooks are dry.

Elijah can now no longer drink from the brook Cherith, which has disappeared, and left only its dry and dusty channel. Yet God has by no

means abandoned his servant : for the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, “ Arise, get thee to Zarepheth, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there ; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”

Elijah had tarried by the brook until it was quite dry ; day after day he saw it wasting away—he knew what was to sustain him when the water failed—but he trusted in God, and did not attempt to remove until he received an order to do so. Now he is commanded to go and take up his abode in Zarepheth. He knows not the person with whom he is to live ; the famine is there ; it is a city of the Gentiles ; and he may also be exposed to the rage of Jezebel, who may find him out, and seize upon him there. But he has God’s warrant—that is enough. He goes without fear, asking no questions : a word of pro-

mise from God is better than a thousand arguments. Elijah obeys God; and though his hostess is a total stranger, yet Providence leads the way, and he meets with the person who is to entertain him at the gate of the city,—“for behold, the widow woman was there, gathering sticks.”

God informed Elijah that was the person; and he called to her, and said, “Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, “Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.” And she said, “As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruise; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” And Elijah said unto her, “Fear not; go and do as



thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me ; and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah ; and she, and he, and her house did eat many days ; and the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail : according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

Here let us remark, first, the goodness of God in providing his servant with a home in a pious family. Secondly, the conduct of this woman—it is worthy of all praise : she was about to cook her last morsel, and never expected another ; but, at the prophet's command, she goes and

brings the first offering to him. Her self-love, her affection for her famishing son, the fact that he who addressed her was a stranger, might all have furnished objections. She might have said, "Let me and my son partake first, and then, if the flour and oil hold out, according to thy word, I will supply thy wants." But here was genuine faith; here an example of trust in God worthy of everlasting remembrance.

Again, what an admirable deliverance is here for a distressed widow: her condition was most afflicting. A widow, in ordinary circumstances, is an object of sympathy: the guide of her youth, her protector and provider is gone: the dreadful stroke of death has left her lonely and desolate. Avarice and oppression, which single out the defenceless as a prey, are everywhere. Thus, the very term widow

awakens the sympathy of a feeling heart at the combination of sorrows which it implies.

But picture to yourself the distress of this widow in these extraordinary times of mournful calamity. It is now many months, and no rain or dew has descended to moisten the parched earth; every blade of grass has withered; the fields, instead of being covered with the golden harvest, are dry and dusty; the leaves and fruit have withered upon the vine and olive-trees; there are no blooming flowers in the fields. The winds, that used to come cool and refreshing, wafting the perfume of a thousand fragrant plants, come now, bearing clouds of dust, and are hot and suffocating. The earth, once verdant, and carpeted with the most lovely green, is now desolate, and like a heated furnace. The mournful lowing of the famishing cat-

tle, and the bleating of the flocks, are heard in every direction.

The fruits of former years being now nearly exhausted, men are seen feebly tottering about; their bones appear as though ready to start through the skin; their eyes are deep sunken in their sockets; their voices are hollow and sepulchral; and every day processions of walking skeletons are seen slowly and feebly moving to the place of sepulture, with the corpses of those who have perished by the famine.

To increase the general distress, men seem to have lost every feeling of humanity. Goaded almost to madness by the fierceness of their appetites, they break over all bounds, and the weak and defenceless become a prey to the strong.

It was in the midst of such times and scenes that deliverance was sent

to this afflicted widow. God sends his prophet, with the promise that neither "the barrel of meal nor the cruise of oil shall fail until rain descend again upon the earth."

There were doubtless many other widows in Israel and Zidon, and perhaps some of them "who had not bowed the knee to Baal;" but God was afflicting the people for their sins; and if some of the righteous do suffer with the wicked in times of public calamity, God knows how to sustain them *here*, and will make them abundantly richer for their trials *hereafter*; for "*all things* work together for good to those who love God."

Elijah remained about two years at Zarephath. It was a delightful place on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, between Tyre and Sidon, but nearest to the latter. M. Maundrell observes, that it is the same which is

now called *Sarphan*, about three hours' travel from Sidon, in the way to Tyre. It consists, at present, of but a few houses on the top of the mountain; but there is reason to believe the principal part of the city stood formerly in the plain below, as there are ruins to be seen there of considerable extent. Before it was the beautiful Mediterranean Sea, which was at that day the "highway of nations." On its bosom were the merchant ships, spreading their snow-white canvass to catch the breezes: the far-famed Lebanon rose sublimely behind it. Its height was ten thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is thus described by a modern traveller:—

"Its towering summit is covered with eternal snow,—a striking spectacle in such a climate, where the beholder, seeking protection from a

burning sun, almost considers the firmament to be on fire ; cascades and waterfalls are sparkling on every side, and delightful odours are sent forth in delicious profusion from the fragrant plants that grow upon its sides ; while dark and terrible ravines cause the idea of terrific grandeur to be mingled with the softness and beauty of its features. This mountain was the delight of King Solomon ; and has been spoken of by him in the Canticles, under every variety of endearing epithet.

“ At the foot of the mountain the climate and productions compare with those of countries near the tropics : as you ascend the first thousand feet they compare with Greece, Italy, and the south of France. The next thousand feet bring us to the climate and productions of Holland, Belgium, and the north of France : another ascent

of equal distance and we arrive at the temperature of England; while we may still arrive, by another stride, within the bleak and dreary regions of Nova Zembla."

As the climate of Lebanon varies from very warm to very cold, as you ascend or descend, and as its productions vary accordingly, here is one of the first natural "botanical gardens" in the world.

"Its head in wintry grandeur towers,  
And whitens with eternal sleet;  
While summer, in a vale of flowers,  
Is sleeping rosy at its feet."

It was here that Solomon studied the various plants, and trees, and shrubs with which it is covered; here he acquired that knowledge of botany, which enabled him to "speak of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall."



On the sides of this beautiful mountain grew those majestic cedars, so often spoken of in Scripture. Here, in "the forests of Lebanon," Solomon's workmen cut down timber for the magnificent buildings which he erected.

Though Lebanon has been described as it appeared in fruitful seasons, and though it must have suffered severely at the time Elijah lived at Zarephath, yet it probably suffered far less than other parts of the country. On its lofty summit were laid up the snows and ice of many winters; and during this dreadful drought these snows would serve as a vast magazine, from which, in the warmer months, the refreshing streams would continue to descend for a long time. By taking advantage of these streams, and by watering those gardens that were situated near the larger rivers,

a scanty subsistence might be obtained for a part of the people and cattle ; corn could also be brought in small quantities from distant countries : thus, while many doubtless perished, a part survived.

Amid these picturesque and sublime scenes, with which his residence abounded, Elijah walked forth and communed with God.

The Jewish prophets were students of nature ; and they were accustomed, far above other men, to refer from nature to nature's God. It was a view of the ever-present Jehovah, walking in majesty amid his works and governing the nations, that gave such sublimity to their conceptions. These conceptions, guided and governed by inspiration, brought forth a poetry altogether unequalled in beauty and grandeur.

But to return to our subject:—

About two years the standing miracle, in the barrel of meal and cruise of oil, continued. Elijah, the woman, and her son, ate flour from the barrel and oil from the cruise, but they were not in the least diminished. Though they had never a large stock beforehand, they had always enough: and so, generally, it will be with us, if we trust in God. David says, "I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

The fare of the prophet and his hostess was certainly very plain; their table was not covered with luxuries or delicacies, but it was good enough, and they received it with thanksgiving. How many in Israel and Zidon would have leaped for joy to have obtained even flour and oil, but they could not.

Let those who pamper their appe-

tites, and are daily asking, What shall I eat and what shall I drink? who murmur if they cannot feast sumptuously every day,—let them think of the mercies they do enjoy; and see how much more God gives them than they deserve. Let them cease their repining, and begin to offer to God thanksgiving.

In *our* goodly land we are very highly favoured of the Lord. We have been here more than two hundred years, and have never had one general failure of our crops. We have a fertile soil; not so fertile, it is true, as to bring forth crops without culture, because such fertility would be a curse rather than a blessing: it would encourage idleness,—and an idle people were never a virtuous people. But our soil yields a sure reward to the cultivator. We have also a healthy clime: if it were warmer it

would enervate ; if it were colder it would stupify. Surely “the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.” God sends us fruitful showers ; he fills our barns and storehouses with plenty ; he gives us summer and winter, cold and heat, in their season.

The widow of Zarephath had now been favoured, for a long time, with the company of the prophet and the blessing of God : the lives of herself and son had been unexpectedly and miraculously preserved ; and she had doubtless concluded that no evil was likely to befall them ;—that if God would work a miracle to save them from an extraordinary death, he would certainly preserve them from ordinary calamities, at least until the famine was ended. How unexpected, therefore, was the visitation of sickness and death !

Have you ever stood by the bed of a sick child? O, it is a mournful picture which we there witness. There is the little sufferer: but yesterday he was in health—his step was light—the rose of beauty was blooming on his cheek—his blood was flowing joyously through his veins—his eye was bright—his voice was music in his mother's ear—he rose as morning broke in the east with her silver light, and he wandered in the fields to pluck the gay flowers. He listened to the songs of the birds in the groves, and was all life amid his play-fellows; at evening he said his prayer, and sweet were his slumbers. His mother watched his expanding mind, as it opened, like a flower bursting from the bud: she delighted to answer his questions, and teach him to be good and happy. But suddenly he comes from his play—he lays his hand upon his head—a tear

starts in his eye,—“Mother, I am sick.”

O, who can tell what a mother feels at that sound! She lays her hand upon his burning forehead—she presses him to her bosom—lays him on his soft couch, and wipes the damps of sickness from his brow. She administers medicine—she hangs over the bed of sickness by day, and stirs not from his couch during the long night. With what anxiety does she watch the progress of disease! As the eye loses its lustre—as the rose fades from the cheek—as the flesh and strength waste away, how her heart palpitates! If at any time the wasting lamp of life seems to revive, what fluttering between hope and fear!

Ah, there is nothing like a *mother's love*; and when death comes, what anguish attends the severing of those tender ties that bound her to her child!

But if this be “the *only son* of his mother,” and she is “*a widow*,” then are “waters of a full cup wrung out” to her. Such was the case with the widow of Zarephath.

Her only son, preserved by miracle from famine, was arrested by sickness,—“and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.”

Though the woman had sufficient reason to believe Elijah was a prophet, and a man of God, yet, as he had not cured her son, but suffered him to die, her faith began to droop; and she said unto Elijah, “What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?” Distress and anguish weigh down the afflicted widow; she owns, indeed, that sin was the cause of her calamity: yet she perversely reflects upon Elijah, as though his prayers, which



had brought the famine on the land, had, for her sin, brought death into her family. In our troubles we are apt to fall out with our best friends, as though they had the power, and ought to have prevented our calamities. But do not blame her too much; her affliction was deep.

Elijah's heart is filled with that heavenly charity which teaches its possessor "to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep." He shares the sorrow of his afflicted friend. "And he said unto her, 'Give me thy son.' And he took him out of her bosom and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, 'O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?' And he stretched himself upon the child three times,

and cried unto the Lord, and said, 'O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.' And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, 'See, thy son liveth.' And the woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.'"

Some persons may suppose that this youth was only in a swoon, or state of suspended animation; and that Elijah stretched himself upon him to rekindle the vital heat, and set his lungs in play again by breathing into them. But it was not so; for "*his soul came into him again.*" It had departed; he had been quite dead.

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S SON.





Besides, if the prophet had only restored suspended animation, the Scriptures would not be likely to record so trifling a matter.

By this act of raising her dead child, the faith of the woman was confirmed. Perhaps God intended to give her this proof of his power and goodness, as she was living in an idolatrous city, and was soon to lose the company and instructions of the prophet. Probably this was one great means of her continuing in the worship of God to the end, and of her final salvation. Our greatest afflictions are often our greatest blessings, though we complain bitterly over them. The death of this child proved to his afflicted mother an everlasting mercy.

This was the first time the slumbers of the dead had ever been broken. Death had reigned triumphant more than three thousand years; but He

who at first commissioned death to enter the world, was willing to show his power over it. He was also willing to attest the mission of his servant Elijah with this seal; which doubtless strengthened his faith, and helped to prepare him for those great undertakings which were before him.

After this Elisha raised another child to life; and Jesus Christ and his apostles raised others; but these are extraordinary events—they are not to be expected except at extraordinary times, and for great moral purposes. The goodness of God appears in these instances. While bereaved friends shared the benefit, and rejoiced over the restoration of departed relatives, the great design was lofty, and worthy of God. The dead were raised for the benefit of the world. These things were done that men, down to the end of time, might believe God's prophets;

might accredit his messengers; embrace the truths of the Bible, and be saved.

We shall die, but no Elijah will call us back to life. After once the gates of death have closed upon us, their bolts will never be drawn back until the general resurrection; our spirits will never come back to enjoy a longer time for preparation to enter the other world. If we die in our sins, all will be over with us for ever.

And now let me ask my dear young friends if they are prepared to die. Are your sins repented of, and forsaken? Are they forgiven? Do you love God? Do you keep his commandments? If you do, then happy are you. God loves you, and Christ smiles upon you. Be faithful unto death, and you shall enter through the gates into that city where there are no famines—no idolatries—no sin—no sorrow; but

where are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. But if you have not repented, do it quickly—seek God early—delay not, that your souls may live.



## CHAPTER III.

Israel somewhat prepared for reform—Elijah sent to Ahab—Meets Obadiah—Character and office of Obadiah—His fears of Ahab—His services to the prophets—Elijah meets Ahab—Character of the interview—Description of Carmel—Ahab, by Elijah's direction, convenes Israel on Mount Carmel—Elijah's challenge—Approved by the people—Prophets of Baal—Their worship described—Ridiculed by Elijah—Baal refuses to hear—Elijah prepares the altar and sacrifice—Fire comes down and consumes it—Prophets of Baal slain—Justice of their punishment—Evils of idolatry—Address to the young.

THE famine had now continued about three years and six months : the distress had been daily increasing ; the people had found no deliverance from their idol gods ; and were, in some measure, prepared for a reform.

The word of the Lord now came to Elijah, saying, "Go, show thyself to Ahab ; and I will send rain upon the earth."

Elijah had no good reason for be-

lieving that Ahab had repented of his idolatry, or that Jezebel had lost any of her hatred toward him; but he knew when God commanded him to go, he was safe. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab: and the famine was sore in Samaria.

Ahab had at his court, at this time, a man named Obadiah, who was governor of his house. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly: for it was so that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred of the prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.

It is not probable that these were chief prophets, such as were inspired to predict future events; but pious young men, who had been gathered together in one of those "schools of the prophets," which were generally under some eminent prophet. These

holy men, refusing to worship Baal, were likely to fall a prey to the rage of Jezebel, and were only saved by the timely interference of Obadiah.

How such a man should be tolerated in Ahab's court may at first seem quite surprising: but Ahab doubtless found the services of Obadiah so profitable as to be unwilling to part with him. Even Nero, the human monster who used to wrap the Christians of Rome in garments of pitch and set fire to them, to light the city by night, had some Christians belonging to his household: God often protects his servants in the very camp of their foes.

About the time Elijah went to meet Ahab, he had commanded Obadiah to "go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks;" (the larger ones might not be entirely dry;) "peradventure," said he, "we may find

grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.”

“So they divided the land between them,—Ahab went one way, by himself, and Obadiah went another way, by himself. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, ‘Art thou that my Lord Elijah?’ And he answered, ‘I am: go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.’ And Obadiah said, ‘What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?’ As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not here, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, ‘Go tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here.’ And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone

from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not ; and so, when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me : but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it told my lord what I did, when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water ? And now thou sayest, ' Go, tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here ; and he shall slay me.' And Elijah said, ' As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to-day.' So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him ; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, ' Art thou he that troubleth Israel ?' "

Elijah answers, " I have not trou-

bled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Both these men appear here quite in character—the wicked king and the holy prophet. Ahab, with insolent pride and abuse, accosts Elijah as the troubler of Israel; Elijah, unawed by the power and menaces of the haughty monarch, retorts the accusation, and bids him see the troubler of Israel in the worshipper of Baalim.

God is now about to employ Elijah in a great and arduous conflict with the idolaters.

On the one hand we see the prophet alone, hated and accused as the cause of those calamities under which the nation was groaning. On the other is the wicked king, with the nation's power at his command. But Elijah is fearless; his arm is nerved

for the conflict by the Lord of hosts ; he boldly challenges the enemies of God to come forward and test their religion. “Send,” says he to Ahab, “and gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred and fifty, which eat at Jezebel’s table.”

Carmel, the spot chosen by Elijah as the place where the people were to meet, was an admirable place for the assembling of a large concourse, and particularly adapted to the present occasion.

“It is from fifteen hundred to two thousand feet above the level of the sea ; its shape resembles a flattened cone, and it is the finest and most beautiful mountain in Palestine. Its name signifies *a fruitful field, or a country of vineyards and gardens*. Modern travellers tell us that wild vines,

olive-trees, and fragrant flowers still indicate its former productiveness. It was clothed in such verdure in the days of Isaiah, that the lofty genius of that prophet, guided by inspiration, could not find a more appropriate figure to represent the flourishing state of the Redeemer's kingdom than 'the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.' But what a picture must it have presented at the time the multitude assembled at the summons of Elijah!"

The vines, which used to be loaded with rich clusters of delicious fruit, were dead; the olive-trees no longer formed pleasant arbours by their green and spreading foliage—they extended their dry and leafless branches, the picture of desolation. The once fertile and lovely vale of Sharon, which lay at its base, presented the aspect of a barren heath,—“the rose



of Sharon and the lily of the valley" were withered.

Such a scene of desolation in this, the very garden of the land, was well calculated to impress the lesson which was to follow.

The curiosity of Ahab was excited to know what Elijah would do. Perhaps he also thought, by assembling the worshippers and prophets of Baal, a fine opportunity would be afforded of publicly destroying Elijah, the great enemy of idol worship.

So he sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. The people were quite willing to come.

Ahab had made diligent search, not only through his own dominions, but also in the adjoining kingdoms, for Elijah. His declaration, that there "should not be rain nor dew but according to his word," had become

generally known: all eyes were therefore turned toward him; and when it was announced that Elijah would meet them at such a time upon Mount Carmel, every one became eager to see him. His enemies, full of rage, wished to see him destroyed as the troubler of Israel. Others wished him either persuaded or forced to pray for rain. And the few, who still adhered to the true God, began to hope Jehovah was about, in some signal manner, to vindicate his own honour and put an end to idolatry.

Thus, on that memorable day, tens of thousands were seen, slowly, through feebleness and famine, wending their way through the once blooming, but now desolate vale of Sharon, and up the sides of Carmel. How many mournful evidences of their sin and folly must have met their eyes as they journeyed toward the top of the

mountain. The displeasure of the God they had forsaken was visibly impressed on every field and vineyard—on every plant and tree. Why will wicked men be infatuated, and bring down judgments on their own heads?

The assembly, consisting of Ahab, his principal officers, the prophets of Baal, and thousands of people, were at length convened.

Having long suffered for their sins, many of them appear to have been brought to some degree of sensibility. They saw the folly of worshipping gods that could give them no relief from their calamities; but their sinful hearts were alienated from the true God. They also feared the king and the prophets of Baal. Thus they were undecided, whether to forsake their idols, and declare for the true God, or continue as they were.

Elijah saw the conflict in their minds; and, rising among them, he thus addressed them: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." But no one answered him a word.

The prophets of Baal had nothing to say. The intrepid Elijah, with his commanding person and voice, stands before them—the evidences of Jehovah's anger are all around them—the people have seen the impotency of their idol gods,—they have not been able to bring down a single shower of rain nor particle of dew for these three years and six months—they cannot withstand the reproachful glance of Elijah's eye—their countenances are fallen, and their tongues speechless. A miserable set of hypocritical pretenders—they have been prophesying for hire—they have helped to

bring calamity upon their nation, and now they are like a wild beast caught in a snare.

The people had nothing to answer ; for their own consciences smote them. They knew Jehovah was the true God—they knew his displeasure was hanging over them—they had forsaken him to follow Baal, and Baal had left them to suffer and perish.

Determined to bring the matter to an issue, Elijah said unto the people, “I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord ; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. They surely need not fear to meet the proposition I am about to make.”

The purport of his address seems to be this :—“Here is only one against four hundred and fifty ; they have the king and all the power of the government on their side, while I have been hunted from city to city, and nation

to nation, as though I were an enemy of my race.”

He then proposes that they should test the respective claims of the two religions before the whole assembly, in the following manner:—“Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”

And all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken.”

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, “Choose ye one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.”

And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice, nor any that answered. These priests then danced and leaped around the altar with many wild and frantic gestures. This was the general custom with ancient idolaters. They danced in a wild and furious manner before the altars of their idols; pretending, at the same time, to be under some supernatural influence, and to prophecy. Dancing, in idol worship, is even the custom among the idolaters of India at the present day. Dr. Buchanan, in his "Christian Researches in Asia," frequently mentions their indecent dancing.

After the prophets of Baal had continued until noon, and had wearied themselves, and disgusted and wearied

ed the people, Elijah began to ridicule them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey; or, peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

Nothing can be conceived more pointed than Elijah's ridicule. These men had been dancing under the scorching sun until they were nearly exhausted; they had cried to Baal until their voices were hoarse and discordant; and now Elijah calls on them to *cry louder*, "for he is a god." That is, "You pretend to believe he is; but perhaps he is conversing with some one, and will attend by-and-by; or he has been engaged in battle, and is pursuing his retreating foes; or it may be he has been out on a hunting excursion, and is chasing a fox or a hare; or he is not at home just now, but is journeying for health or plea-



sure ; or perchance he is dozing, and needs to be awakened by louder cries. Lift up your voices ; your case is certainly a very urgent one : it would be a great pity if you should be put to shame before all this assembly.”

These priests, finding themselves thus taunted before the multitude, cried still louder. But Baal was as obstinate a god as ever ; he still refused to hear. Then they cut themselves, after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

Perhaps my young readers are curious to know whether these men did themselves really believe that Baal, which was nothing but the sun, represented by a carved image, could hear them. It is not very probable that they did. They lived in a land where the worship of the true God had been practised for many years ; where

there was much religious knowledge. They were not, therefore, like those ignorant heathen who never knew God; but they were caught in a snare. The people were assembled, had heard Elijah's challenge, and had pronounced his proposal fair and right. Thus, if Baal's prophets refused to come to a trial, they feared the people; and they thought, perhaps, by their great efforts in crying and dancing, and even cutting themselves, they could persuade the multitude that they were at least sincere, and had thought Baal to be a god.

That the people might see more clearly the folly of idolatry, and be the more disgusted with it, Elijah seems to have wished to keep the priests of Baal playing their ludicrous farce as long as possible. So, he goads them on with his keen satire, and keeps exhibiting them before the

assembly all day. If they could have escaped, both fear of what would be the issue of the contest, and of the indignation of the people, as well as shame, would have induced them to flee for their lives. But being unable to escape from their difficulties, or retreat from what they felt to be a very awkward situation, they continued their fruitless efforts until the time of offering the evening sacrifice; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah said unto all the people, "Come near unto me;" and all the people came near to Elijah. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. This was probably built in the time of the judges, before the temple at Jerusalem was erected.

They had not, in those days, convenient churches as we have, but

often erected altars on the tops of mountains, or high hills, where sacrifices were offered by the prophets and ministers of religion. But now, for many years, the people had forsaken the worship of Jehovah, and his altars lay in mournful desolation. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, and with these stones he rebuilt the altar which had been broken down; and he made a trench about the altar; then he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." And he said, "Do it the second time," and they did it the second time. And he said, "Do it the third time," and they did it the third time.

What the vessels here called bar-

rels held, we do not know precisely. It is not likely they were just like our barrels, but were vessels in which water had been brought down from some fountain not yet entirely dry, to serve the king and his officers during their stay upon the mountain.

The object of pouring the water upon the wood and altar was to show that no fire had been in any way concealed under the altar. There could be no chance, indeed, for any such trick, for Elijah was alone on the part of God. The priests of Baal were looking on, ready and able to discover if any thing was conducted unfairly; and the whole was conducted in presence of Ahab and the multitude.

After water enough to thoroughly drench the wood, the flesh of the bullock, the altar, and to fill the trench, had been poured on, Elijah the prophet came near, and said, "Lord God

of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known, this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant; and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that the people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”

This was certainly a beautiful and becoming prayer. Here was no wild and frantic dancing, nor leaping up and down before the altar—no vain repetitions—no cutting and gashing of the flesh, as though the God he was worshipping was a blood-thirsty being, and wished his sacrifices stained with human gore: here was no crying from morning till noon, and from noon till evening; Elijah’s God was neither conversing nor pursuing, in a journey nor asleep. Thus, Elijah, knowing the character of the God he served, approached him sol-

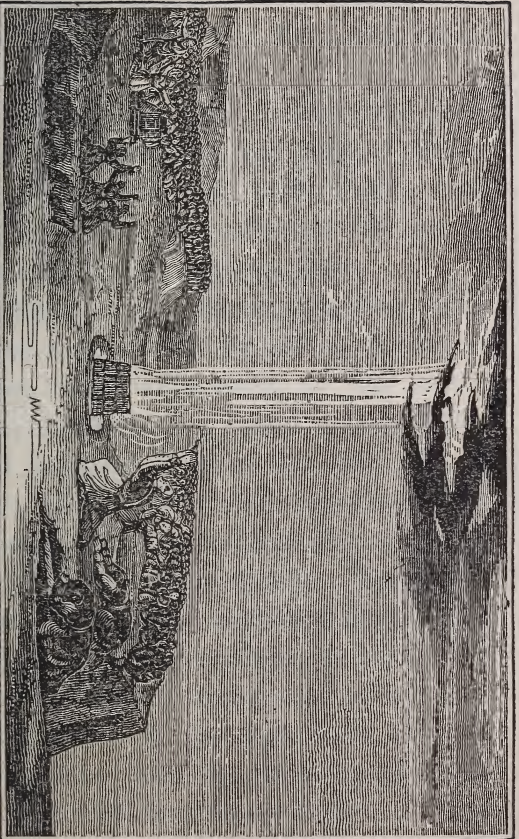
emly and reverently, with a short, but very emphatic petition.

The multitude were now all anxiety and attention. The few who loved Jehovah, and had not bowed the knee to Baal, were solemnly lifting up their hearts to Jehovah, that he would hear and vindicate his honour, his worship, his servant Elijah, and save Israel from idolatry. The priests of Baal stood looking on ; and in their countenances were visible the mingled emotions of hope, fear, and rage. They hoped Elijah's prayers would be as fruitless as their own ; that his God would give no more evidence of his being and power than Baal had done. If this should be the result, they would then, at least, be on an equality with Elijah.

But while they thus hoped, they had already seen sufficient evidence of the power of Elijah's God in the

drought and famine which he had sent, to lead them to fear. And there can be no doubt, but that when they saw the difficulty into which Elijah had already brought them, and remembered his cutting sarcasms, they were greatly enraged. Thus, agitated and tormented by their conflicting passions, fatigued with their long and clamorous devotions, and lacerated and gory from the wounds they had inflicted on themselves, they must have excited, by their very appearance, the smile of contempt from the surrounding multitude. The worst for them, however, was yet to come; for, as Elijah concluded his prayer, the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and, to make the *miracle more complete*, the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it,





**ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.**



they fell on their faces, and said, "The Lord, he is the God! the Lord, he is the God!"

Then Elijah said, "Take the prophets of Baal, let not any of them escape." And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

There were three reasons why these men should be put to death:—First, they were some of the chief agents in seducing Israel into idolatry, and keeping it up in the land. It is true, Ahab and Jezebel were the prime movers in establishing the worship of Baal in the kingdom: but these men, for the gain they saw they could obtain, sold themselves as ready instruments to oppose and overthrow the worship of the true God, and seduce Israel into the worship of Baal.

Secondly, they knew better. They were not in a land which had not

known the true God; but in one where he had been worshipped for many generations. Besides, they had the whole three years and six months in which the famine continued, according to the word of Elijah, in which to repent. Moreover, they saw the miracle, when fire fell from heaven in answer to Elijah's prayer; and if even then they had repented, probably they might have been saved. But, though the people fell on their faces, saying, "The Lord, he is the God!" we do not learn that one of the priests of Baal joined in the acknowledgment.

Thirdly, the law of God had long before expressly forbidden idolatry, under penalty of death. Deut. xviii, 2, 5, 7: "If there be any found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wicked-

ness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the hosts of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain that such abomination is wrought in Israel: then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which has committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."

Now the priests of Baal had broken this law; and God directed Elijah to have them put to death.

But perhaps some of my young readers will wish to know why idolatry is so great a sin, and deserves so

severe a punishment. On this point I will endeavour to satisfy their minds by showing them the evils of idolatry.

First, idolatry originates in wilful ignorance and a corrupt heart. "They did not like," says St. Paul, "to retain God in their knowledge." All nations once knew God. Being the children of two great ancestors, Adam and Noah, they had religious knowledge: they had also the works of God all around them, from which to learn his being and perfections; but "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." They were disposed to be wicked; and as the true God was holy, and required holiness—as he was always present to inspect their conduct, and had declared he would bring them to judgment for it, they did not like *such* a God. They want-

ed a God as corrupt and wicked as themselves : or, at least, one that did not care how wicked they were. So they worshipped sometimes the sun and stars of heaven ; but finally they made images, in the shape of men or women, or beasts, or fish ; and sometimes of monsters, unlike any thing in earth or heaven. These images, made of wood, stone, gold, or silver, they pretended were inhabited by some sort of spirit—frequently cruel, revengeful, licentious, and blood-thirsty. They pretended these gods were themselves guilty of all sorts of impure and filthy practices—of hatred and murder ; and required such practices of their worshippers : those that were more wise, deceived and made gain of the more simple. And thus they went on, corrupting themselves and one another. They committed all sorts of abominations ; and even went

so far as to seize and murder each other, under the pretence of offering sacrifice to their gods.

Moloch, which some suppose the same as Baal, or Baal under another name, was said to be “made of brass, and placed on a brazen throne; the head was that of a calf, with a crown upon it; the throne and image were made hollow, and a furious fire was kindled within; the flames penetrated into the body and limbs of the idol; and when the arms were red hot, the victim was thrown into them, and was almost immediately roasted to death; its cries were drowned by drums, &c.” The Bible says of the Canaanites,—“Their sons and their daughters they made to pass through the fire unto Moloch.”

Lest it should appear altogether incredible to the young reader that men should have been guilty of such dread-



ful cruelties, I will give him a picture of idolatry in modern times.

Dr. Buchanan visited India in 1806. The following extracts from his journal give us a faithful picture of modern idolatry.

“We know,” says he, “that we are approaching Juggernaut,” (the town of the great Hindoo idol of the same name,) “by the multitude of bones which we have seen for some days strewed by the way. At this place we have been joined by several large bodies of pilgrims—perhaps two thousand in number—who have come from various parts of northern India ; some of them, with whom I have conversed, say that they have been two months on their march, travelling slowly, in the hottest season of the year, with their wives and children. Numbers of pilgrims die on the road, and their bodies generally remain unburied.

On a plain by the river, near the pilgrim's caravansera, (inn,) at this place, are more than a hundred skulls. The dogs, jackals, and vultures seem to live on human prey. The vultures exhibit a shocking *tameness*; the obscene animals will not leave the body sometimes till we come close to them. This Buddruck is a horrid place: wherever I turn my eyes I meet with death in some shape or other; surely Juggernaut cannot be worse than Buddruck."

"In sight of Juggernaut, 12th of June.

"Many thousands of pilgrims accompanied us for some days past. They cover the road, both before and behind, as far as the eye can reach. At nine o'clock this morning the temple of Juggernaut appeared in view, at a great distance. When the multitude first saw it they gave a shout, and fell to the ground, and worship-

ped. From the place where I now stand I have a view of a host of people, like an army, encamped at the outer gate of the town of Juggernaut. I passed a devotee to-day, who laid himself down at every step; measuring the road to Juggernaut by the length of his body, as a penance of merit, to please the god."

"Juggernaut, 14th June.

"I have seen Juggernaut. The scene at Buddruck is but a vestibule to Juggernaut. No record of ancient or modern history can give, I think, an adequate idea of this valley of death. The idol called Juggernaut has been considered as the Moloch of the present age, and he is justly so named; for the sacrifices offered up to him by self-devotement are not less criminal, perhaps not less numerous, than those recorded of the Moloch of Canaan. Two other idols ac-

company Juggernaut, namely, Boloram and Shubuaun, his brother and sister, for there are three deities worshipped here. They receive equal adoration; and sit on thrones of nearly equal height.

“This morning I viewed the temple—a stupendous fabric, and truly commensurate with the sway of the ‘horrid king.’ As other temples are usually adorned with figures emblematical of their religion, so Juggernaut;—the walls and gates are covered with indecent emblems in massive and durable sculpture. I have also visited the sand plains by the sea—in some places whitened by the bones of the pilgrims: and another place, a little way out of the town, called by the English the Golgotha, where the dead bodies are usually cast forth; and where dogs and vultures are ever seen. The vultures and dogs often

feed together; and sometimes begin their attacks before the pilgrim be quite dead.”

“Juggernaut, 18th June.

“I have returned home from witnessing a scene which I shall never forget. At twelve o'clock this day, being the great day of the feast, the Moloch of Hindostan was brought out of his temple, amid the acclamations of hundreds of thousands of his worshippers. When the idol was placed on his throne a shout was raised by the multitude such as I never heard before. The throne of the idol was placed on a stupendous car, or tower, about sixty feet in height, resting on wheels; which indented the ground deeply as they turned slowly under the ponderous machine. Attached to it were six cables, of the size and length of a ship's cable, by which the people drew it along. Upon the tower were

the priests and satellites of the idol, surrounding his throne. The idol is a block of wood, having a frightful visage painted black, with a wide mouth of a bloody colour; his arms are of gold, and he is dressed in gorgeous apparel. I went on in the procession close by the tower of Moloch, which, as it was drawn with difficulty, grated on its many wheels harsh thunder. After a few minutes it stopped; and now the worship of the god began. A high priest mounted the car in front of the idol, and pronounced his obscene stanzas in the ears of the people, who responded at intervals in the same strain. "These songs," said he, "are the delight of the god; his car can only move when he is pleased with the song." After the tower had again moved, and proceeded some way, a pilgrim announced that he was ready to offer himself a sacrifice to

the idol. He laid himself down in the road before the tower, as it was moving along, lying on his face, with his arms stretched forwards: the multitude passed around him, leaving the space clear, and he was crushed to death by the wheels of the tower: a shout of joy was raised to the god. He is said to *smile* when the libation of the blood is made."

"Juggernaut, June 20th.

"Moloch, horrid king, besmear'd with blood  
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears."

"The horrid solemnities still continue. Yesterday a woman devoted herself to the idol. She laid herself down in an oblique direction, so that the wheel did not kill her instantaneously, but she died in a few hours. This morning, as I passed the place of skulls, nothing remained of her but her bones.

"And this, thought I, is the *worship*

of the Brahmins of Hindostan: and their worship in its sublimest degree. What then shall we think of their *private manners* and of their *morals*."

"The shark," says Rev. Mr. Ellis, "was formerly worshipped in the South Sea islands. On the occasion of worship the priests sallied forth, and wherever a company of persons were assembled, a rope, with a noose, was suddenly and unexpectedly thrown among them; and the first person taken in the snare, man, woman, or child, was strangled, cut in pieces, and thrown into the sea, to be devoured by the shark."

These facts show the practical tendency of idolatry. A system which breaks the ties which bind man to his Creator; which implies the basest ingratitude toward him who made us; and one calculated to debase man be-



low the beast: a system which makes him sensual and blood-thirsty—leads him to torment himself and butcher others.

It was because the Canaanites had cast off the worship of God, and become the worst of idolaters, that God took away their country and gave it to the Israelites; and it was because the priests of Baal were endeavouring to seduce Israel into idolatry that Elijah was commanded to perform the painful task of directing their execution.

Let me now appeal to my young friends, in closing this chapter, in behalf of those sinful and miserable people who are still idolaters. Can we think of the poor Hindoo, casting himself under the car of Juggernaut—lying down on a bed of spikes—swinging high in air by a hook in his back, or the Hindoo mother giving her child

to the crocodile to be devoured alive, without pity? Can we think of the poor African, who worships the stuffed skin of a monkey, and sometimes worships even demons, and not feel for him?

And do you ask, what we must do: I answer, Pray for them—send the Bible and missionary to teach them better. If any of you should grow up, and wish to do good in the world, and should feel that it was the will of God, go among them, and teach them the way to heaven.

Our Saviour says he will make inquiry, in the great day of *judgment*, whether we have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and ministered to those in distress. Now, thousands of the heathen are literally the most destitute of beings. They are destitute of comfortable houses; they are nearly naked, and often hungry, without

bread to eat ; they are without schools, churches, and Sabbaths ; they have no Bible, no book of any kind ; they know not God, and are unacquainted with the Saviour ; they are ignorant, superstitious, and unhappy ; they are given to lying, thieving, and murder. If any thing can save them it is the gospel ; send the gospel. The missionary has carried it to the savage of America ; on its reception he throws aside his tomahawk and scalping-knife ; he becomes pious ; and then civilization follows in the train of Christianity. Having exchanged the warwhoop for the songs of Zion, he lays aside his wandering, idle habits ; he fences and ploughs his fields ; his wigwam is exchanged for a comfortable house ; his rifle for the scythe ; and hence all the blessings of civilized life are given him by giving him the gospel. The gospel not only

saves his soul, but shelters, feeds, and clothes his body.

I hope my young readers will never hear nor think of the sad condition of the heathen without breathing a prayer to heaven for them; and will never allow an opportunity to pass without contributing to send them the gospel.

## CHAPTER IV.

Elijah prays for rain, which is given in abundance—He goes to Jezreel—Jezebel, enraged at the destruction of the prophets of Baal, seeks Elijah's life—Elijah flees into the wilderness and requests to die—Is fed by an angel—Goes to Horeb, and there receives a manifestation of God's presence and power—He is sent to anoint Elisha as his companion and successor—Ahab and Jezebel, being occupied in other matters, do not molest Elijah for two years—Ahab covets the vineyard of Naboth—Naboth is murdered by order of Jezebel, and Ahab goes to take possession—Elijah is sent by God to pronounce sentence upon him and his house—Ahab is alarmed, and assumes the garb of a penitent—His sentence is in part suspended.

THE prophets of Baal were now destroyed, and Israel had given some evidence of a determination to return to the worship of the true God. Ahab was so far intimidated by the voice of the people as not to attempt saving the prophets of Baal. It may be he felt some penitence for his idolatry, and might have forsaken it, but for Jezebel. But he was a very weak

king, and was entirely under the influence of that wicked woman.— God, however, saw best to spare him a while longer; and Elijah, like a true patriot and Christian, felt it his duty to treat him as it became a subject to treat a ruler while he remained such.

Ahab had been very much excited by the wonderful events which had taken place, and had need of refreshment; he had also a journey to make which required haste. So Elijah said unto Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." Then Ahab went up, (to his tent, probably,) to eat and to drink.

But Elijah's work is not done. Though fatigued with his long-continued exertions and anxiety, he goes up again to the top of Carmel, and casts himself down upon the earth to

pray for rain. And he said to his servant, "Go up, now, look toward the sea;" (the Mediterranean;) and he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." But Elijah said, "Go again seven times." And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, "There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Elijah knew now that his prayer would be immediately answered. He therefore sent his servant to Ahab, saying, "Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

The cloud now rose from the sea; the sun, which had been shining with a most dazzling brightness for three years and six months, was obscured; the dark clouds, in huge volumes, were borne on by the winds. The earth, having been so long without rain, was very dry, and clouds of dust rose, increasing the darkness; the

lightnings blazed, and were followed by repeated peals of thunder ; and the rain poured down in torrents.

A thunder storm is full of majesty ; it speaks of God. Jehovah had just manifested himself by fire, on Mount Carmel ; and now Israel beholds him riding forth on the wings of the tempest. Here are majesty and mercy combined. Every drop of the descending shower was a token of mercy. Well might Israel again fall down, crying, “The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.”

And Ahab arose, and went to Jezreel, where he had a palace. And Elijah girded up his loose and flowing robe, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. Though fatigued and hungry, the Lord gave him strength for this journey, which was about thirty miles.

The eastern princes used frequent-



ly to be preceded by running footmen and chanters. Hanway tells us, that when the famous Kouli Khan removed his camp, he was preceded by his running footmen and chanters, who were nine hundred in number, and frequently chanted moral sentences, &c. Bishop Patrick supposes Elijah ran before Ahab as one of his footmen, showing readiness to honour him as the ruler of Israel, and giving him evidence that he was not his enemy. Some have supposed, as it is said *the hand of the Lord was upon him*, that he was inspired while on the way to compose and sing hymns of thanksgiving for the descending rain. At all events, he acted under God's direction, and did nothing unworthy of his prophetic character.

Ahab, on returning to his house, told Jezebel all that had been done; and how Elijah had slain the pro-

phets of Baal. Enraged at the tidings, she sent a messenger unto Elijah, to tell him she had sworn by her gods that she would make his life as the life of one of the prophets of Baal, between that time and the same hour of the day on the morrow. In her blind rage she forgot to conceal her intention until she could get Elijah in her power ; or perhaps she thought he would scorn to fly—and so he would, if God had commanded him to remain where he was—but having no direction to tarry, he arose and went to Beersheba, a town belonging to the kingdom of Judah. Here he left his servant ; either because he did not wish to expose him to the hardships which he saw before himself, or perhaps he was already too much exhausted to go farther. But Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down under a tree. Being thus

alone, he began to reflect on what he had done and suffered, and yet the work of reformation seemed to have made but little progress. Jezebel still lived, though the prophets of Baal were dead; she sought his life, and had the power of the whole kingdom at her command. Excessive fatigue of body served also to depress his spirits. Under these trials he seems, for a little time, to have lost that manly resolution for which he was so remarkable; and, tired of a wicked world, he said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." This conduct of the prophet seems to have been in the mind of St. James, when he speaks of Elijah as "a man of like passions as we are."

There was, however, a Providence overruling all this. Elijah learned that unless God gave him courage,

and supported him, he was weak, and like other men. He was also kept from pride, or valuing himself upon the great miracles he had wrought.

He now betook himself to rest, and

“Nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep,”

came to his relief. He slept until an angel came and touched him, and said unto him, “Arise and eat.” And he looked up, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink; and being still in need of more rest, he laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.” And he arose, and did eat and drink.

Here we see the care which God still has over his servant. When he

was by the brook Cherith the ravens brought him food, now God sends an angel to comfort and feed him.

Angels are holy spirits, which God often sends on errands of love to his children. Angels came to bring Lot out of Sodom before it was destroyed by fire. An angel went forth amid the hosts of the Assyrians, when they came up against Judah to destroy it, and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand of them in one night. And when the prophet Daniel was cast into a den of lions, God sent his angel to comfort and protect him. All the angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." They are often near us when we know it not; and protect us from dangers of which we are ignorant.

Elijah now arose, and journeyed toward Mount Horeb. This mountain, a peak of the same range, and near

to Sinai, is the one where Moses saw the burning bush. Here Elijah could have time to rest, and refresh himself, and here, amid those very mountains where God had communed with Moses, and given his law to Israel, he could meditate and pray. But he had about one hundred and fifty miles to travel before he could reach Horeb. In going this distance he spent forty days; his route lay mostly through a desert part of it—the wilderness through which Moses led the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to Canaan, which is called “that great and terrible wilderness.” Here the traveller can make but a slow and toilsome progress. An ocean of burning sand is spread out before him; at every step the yielding sand gives way, and his foot sinks deep. When the winds sweep over these deserts they bear clouds of sand upon their

wings, which almost suffocate the weary, panting traveller.

But there are spots of verdure, like islands in the midst of a desolate ocean; here springs of clear water gush out of the earth; the lofty palm tree rises in beauty, crowned at its summit with dark green leaves, in fine contrast with which are seen clusters of rich fruit. Various sorts of flowering shrubs and sweet-scented plants display their beauties, and perfume the air with their odours. Around these springs Israel encamped while journeying to Canaan; and here we may suppose Elijah sat down to refresh his weary limbs while on his way to Horeb. He probably thought of the miracle of the manna. He remembered the waters which flowed from the rock at Horeb, whither he was going. He reflected upon God's mercy to Israel in giving them lead-

ers and instructors like Moses and Joshua—in giving them his land, and leading them into Canaan. And while he adored Jehovah he wept over the perverseness of Israel. He arises again, and walks forward. In the distance, we may suppose, he occasionally spies a band of those lawless freebooters, or robbers, who roam over the desert, “their hand against every man and every man’s hand against them.” They are the sons of Ishmael, the archer. Elijah turns aside; or perhaps, having nothing to tempt their avarice, he finds it unnecessary to do so. He may also, perhaps, meet some of those caravans of men with loaded camels, which appear like fleets sailing over the desert. He has no bread to eat,—but he feels none of the pangs of hunger. God can easily make the same meal, which usually lasts us six hours, support his prophet in health



and vigour forty days and forty nights.

While still many miles distant, a range of lofty mountains appears in view. From the summit of the range two peaks raise their frowning heads, overlooking the country in every direction. This is the first time Elijah has ever beheld them; and an impression of awe fills his mind while he gazes on Sinai and Horeb. He thinks of the cloud which hung around the brow of Sinai while Moses talked with God. He almost fancies it is now there that he sees the lightnings, hears the thunders, and beholds the mountain quake under the footsteps of Jehovah. He casts his eye on Horeb, and remembers the waters gushing, from under the stroke of Moses' rod, from the flinty rock. He calls to mind God's appearance in the burning bush, when Moses was commissioned

to go and deliver Israel from the oppressions of Pharaoh.

Unconsciously he pauses to gaze ; and again he quickens his pace toward the mount of God. There at length arrived, and having toiled up its sides through narrow defiles and under overhanging cliffs, Elijah stands upon the very rock where Moses held that great interview with his Maker, and received the ten commandments written on tables of stone.

Not a tree, or shrub, or blade of grass is to be seen on these bare and rugged mountains. But a crowd of hallowing thoughts rush into the mind. There, in full view, is the mighty desert where Israel journeyed ; there the springs by which they encamped ; there the spot where they fell into the very sin for which God has now been chastising them—where they made the golden calf, saying, “ These be

thy gods, O Israel ;” there, in that boundless desert, and beneath those sands—rolling and shifting like the waves of the ocean—the bones of those whom God cut off for idolatry were buried.

Here was one of the best places for Elijah in his present state of mind. Was he disposed to think Israel at the present time more wicked and perverse than ever before?—he had only to cast an eye to the foot of the mount to behold the place where they made their golden calf, even while Moses was talking with Jehovah, and the cloud of his presence was covering the top of Sinai, full in their view.

Did Elijah say within himself, “My trials are greater than those of any of God’s ministers?”—from the place where he stood he might see the identical spot where Moses stood, surrounded by a tumultuous assembly of

idolaters, in the midst of trials greater even than his. Was he fearing that God would no longer bear with such an incorrigible people? The wilderness stretching out before him was the very place of their forty years' wanderings and murmurings; but God did forbear, and even fed them in the midst of all their base ingratitude, by a constant miraculous supply.

The trials, the faith, and the patience of those who have gone before, furnish very profitable subjects for reflection in times of difficulty; especially when we can get a vivid impression of them.

When that great and good man, the Rev. Robert Hall, was passing through his last illness, he suffered the most excruciating pains. But the thought of his Saviour's sufferings, seemed almost to make him forget

his own. "What," said he, "are my sufferings to the sufferings of Christ." He spoke of the nervous irritation occasioned by the nails driven through the hands and feet—the thirst—the oppression of breathing—the hurried action of the heart—of the ingratitude of those for whom he went about doing good—of the agonies of both body and mind while he hung so long upon the cross; and again spoke of the lightness of his own sufferings compared with those of his Saviour.

Such reflections prove a sort of medicine to the soul in its hours of despondency.

To have his memory refreshed with the history of past times, and to make the impression more striking, we may suppose were among the reasons why Elijah was led to Horeb and Sinai in his present afflicted state of feeling.

While he was on mount Horeb Eli-

jah lodged in a cave. How he was fed while here we do not know. The mountain furnishes no kind of fruit. But perhaps the same heavenly spirit which fed him forty days before, still unseen, accompanied him, and again supplied his wants.

While he was in the cave the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah replied, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." And the Lord told him to "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord."

Suddenly a great and strong wind swept over the mountain; the rocks were rent; huge masses of the solid







granite were loosened from the banks of the precipices, and mighty rocks rushed leaping and roaring to the plain below. But the Lord was not in the wind. The wind past, a solemn stillness succeeded the storm. But soon a hollow murmur was heard in the caverns of the mountain. The murmur rose—the mountain groaned—it heaved as though about to be rolled from its deep bed. Yawning caverns opened on every side, and the mountain rolled and staggered to and fro like a drunken man. But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

The earthquake ceased. A lurid fire blazed forth—broad sheets of lightning darted across the heavens. The whole mountain seemed a vast magazine of combustibles about to kindle into one vast fiery furnace. The fire was suddenly extinguished. But the Lord was not in the fire. After

the fire “a still small voice” was heard. Elijah knew the Lord was in the still small voice. In reverence he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went and stood in the entering in of the cave.

It is difficult for us to tell the meaning of all this scene. Some have supposed that, Elijah being now in the same place where God gave the law to Moses amid thunderings and lightnings, and the quaking of the mountain, he intended to favour Elijah in like manner, with a signal of his power and presence. But that to show him that the Lord delighteth in mercy more than in judgments, and that the religion which he was intending to set up among men was one of lenity and sweetness, he appears in the still small voice. Perhaps the design was to give Elijah an impression of God’s majesty and might—to show

him how easily he could punish transgressors ; and to let him see how dreadful a God the enemies of religion and the persecutors of his ministers would have to contend with in the end ; and to show him also that in the *present world*, God is speaking in the still voice of mercy and persuasion.

After this the question was asked a second time, “ What doest thou here, Elijah ? ”

Elijah answered as before, that he had been very jealous for the Lord ; that the interests of religion had lain very near his heart ; and he had done and suffered much for the cause ; but that Israel was incorrigibly wicked. They had forsaken his covenant, thrown down his altars, and slain his prophets with the sword ; that he alone was left, and they were seeking his life. He seems to think that all the rest of God’s prophets had perish-

ed; and that though the people had been forced to confess God when they saw the miracle on mount Carmel, yet that there was no real reformation; that, fickle as the wind, they would return to float with the general current, and again worship idols.

Moreover, Elijah seemed to think there was no worshipper of Jehovah in all Israel but himself. What a mistake! How differently would he have felt if he could have looked over the cities of Israel as God looked. Here he would have found a pious family praying for the destruction of idolatry; there another, offering up a petition for the removal of Ahab and Jezebel, and for a better monarch—one that feared God—in their place; there, in a retired chamber, he would have heard a pious Israelite praying for the Prophet Elijah, that God would protect him from the malice of Jezebel;

that he would make him strong and courageous to carry forward the reformation already begun. How would a view of the real state of things have cheered his heart, for God told him there were at this time "seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal."

After God had both reproved and encouraged Elijah, he directed him to return, and on his way to the wilderness of Damascus to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be a prophet in his room. He also told Elijah that he was preparing other means to cure Israel of idolatry: that these very persons whom he was now sent to anoint would be some of his chief instruments in doing so; Hazael would be a great scourge to them,

and slay many, and Jehu would destroy the house of Ahab, and Elisha the prophet should be his successor in prophesying among them, and chastising them by famines and judgments. For "it should come to pass that him that escaped the sword of Hazael Jehu should slay, and he that escaped the sword of Jehu Elisha should slay."

So Elijah left Horeb and returned to Abel-meholah. This place lies a short distance from Samaria to the north-west, and near the foot of mount Gilboa, where Saul was slain in battle. He found Elisha in his field ploughing; there were eleven yoke of oxen passing on before him, and he was following with the twelfth. Palestine was thickly inhabited, and exceedingly well cultivated. Even the sides of the mountains were formed into terraces and converted into

gardens and vineyards. The portion of land owned by even wealthy men must have been comparatively small. Elisha therefore was probably quite a rich man to keep so many persons and oxen in his employ. But it was esteemed a very honourable employment in those days to till the earth. The most wealthy considered it no disgrace to follow the plough. There is something pleasing about these times of primitive simplicity. Abraham, though having princely possessions, and servants enough to make a small army, walks forth with his shepherd's crook in his hand, superintending his affairs in person. Boaz is found among his reapers, and Elisha is in the field among his ploughmen. There is real independence in sitting down to a table covered with fruits which we have raised with our own hands. An honest farm-

er is indeed one of the best and happiest of men.

Though Elisha was well employed, God had still more important business for him to perform. So Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah. Either it was the custom in those days for the prophets to show their successors that the Lord had called them, by casting their mantles upon them, or else probably Elijah told Elisha what he meant by that act.

Elisha then asked permission to bid his friends adieu, saying, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." Elijah gave him permission, and he returned back from him and took a yoke of oxen and slew them, and boiled their flesh, and gave unto the people and they did eat. Then he



arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.

The conduct of Elisha is on this occasion very commendable. He has many ties to bind him to that most dear of all earthly places, *home*. He had been accustomed to walk forth in his own pleasant fields. There were the cattle and the sheep quietly grazing in the verdant pastures. The beautiful vines covered the sides of the steep hills. The olive yards and the grain fields presented a delightful variety. These were the fields cultivated by his ancestors, and doubly dear on that account. He must leave these. But much more—he must leave his aged parents. They were doubtless among the number who “had not bowed the knee to Baal.” They had trained up a son whom they hoped should comfort them in their declining years. On his arm

they expected to lean as they walked down the declivity of life. But God calls him. He must go to share the toils and the dangers, the privations and persecutions of Elijah. With mutual embraces and many tears they part; but it is the parting of pious parents and a pious son. He bids them a tender farewell and goes manfully to join the veteran Elijah, and they give him the parting blessing and resign him up to the service of God.

Elijah in his despondency had particularly complained of his lonely condition. "I *only* am left." How was his heart now cheered by the company of such a companion as Elisha. I almost seem to see them, as, sitting under the shade of a spreading olive, or sheltered by the foliage of the mantling vine, they converse upon the works and ways of God.

The manly and dignified countenance of Elijah seems to partake of the sublimity of the scenes which he describes, while he speaks of what he had just been witnessing in the mount of God. Elisha sits listening—and an impression of awe is visible upon every feature—he looks upon Elijah almost as a being from another world. Closer and still closer are the strong and tender ties of affection drawn as their acquaintance matures. Elijah daily thanks God for such a companion, and Elisha rejoices to be counted worthy of enjoying the instructions and sharing the perils and labours of Elijah.

About this time Ahab and Jezebel seem to have found enough to do without hunting after Elijah. For Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered together a mighty host, and with thirty-two tributary kings besieged

Samaria. Though beaten at the first attack, he came again the next year with a host quite as large. He was again repulsed; but these wars filled Ahab with alarm, and turned his attention almost entirely to that quarter. It is somewhat remarkable that Elijah and Elisha are not mentioned during these wars. Other prophets are spoken of as bearing messages to Ahab; but these two chief prophets did not see him during that whole time. But we need not suppose they were idle. They were doubtless searching out and encouraging those who worshipped the true God. They may also have taken this opportunity to revive "the schools of the prophets," and thus prepare a set of ministers to carry forward the work of reformation.

Though God had delivered Israel from the famine, and had sent his

prophet to instruct and encourage Ahab, at a time when his courage was almost gone, and though he had delivered him from the overwhelming hosts that had come up to destroy him, yet he did not repent of his sins. He was Ahab still—wicked as ever.

There was a vineyard near to Ahab's palace in Samaria. It was doubtless a fruitful spot, and looked temptingly to Ahab. The gloating eyes of avarice are never satisfied. The miser is in pain to see any thing worth having belonging to another. This field belonged to an Israelite, whose name was Naboth. He was an honest and independent man, one who regarded the law of God, and respected the memory of his fathers. Ahab had possessions enough, palaces, gardens, orchards, vineyards, and pleasure-grounds ; but a miserly

soul is never satisfied. And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me thy vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard, or if it seem good to thee I will give thee the worth of it in money." And Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

The request of Ahab was contrary to the law. A man's landed estate was regarded as a *family inheritance*. It belonged to his children as well as himself. If he was distressed for money, he might sell the use of it for a certain length of time, but he must not part with it for ever. If Naboth had sold his vineyard to Ahab to be converted into "a garden of herbs," there was little probability of its ever coming back. After once falling into

such hands, the children of Naboth would never have been the better for it. Besides, it was valued by Naboth as the inheritance of his ancestors. This was the spot they had owned for many generations. Here were the trees they had planted; this the very spot where they had toiled.— This soil had become sacred by many endearing associations. To sell it would be to dishonour his fathers, injure his children, and break the law of God. As kings were set to execute the laws, and not to break them, Ahab had no business to buy Naboth's vineyard; and Naboth acted like a good citizen in refusing to sell it.

When Ahab heard the answer of Naboth, he went into his house much displeased. His pride was offended, and his covetousness disappointed. He threw himself upon his bed, and

turning his face to the wall, refused to eat bread or be comforted. But Jezebel, coming in, inquired the cause of his sadness. "Because," said he, "I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money, or else if it please thee I will give thee another vineyard for it; and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard." He says nothing of the reason which Naboth gave why he would not sell him the vineyard. But this was a reason that he cared nothing about. It was a light thing for Ahab and Jezebel to trample on God's laws.

On hearing Naboth's refusal to part with his vineyard, the haughty spirit of Jezebel at once kindles into rage. In a tone of biting sarcasm she reproaches Ahab as cowardly, and acting beneath his dignity in tolerating the refusal. "Dost thou now," says



she, "govern the kingdom of Israel?" or, "In truth the king has very excellent authority in Israel. Arise and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Jezebel now set about accomplishing her wicked purpose of getting the vineyard and revenging herself on Naboth for refusing to part with it. To do this she contrived a scheme of *falsehood, perjury, and murder combined*. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that dwelt in the city with Naboth. The Bible has recorded a copy of the letters. They were written in these words: "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people, and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou

didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out and stone him that he may die.”

It was usual upon the approach of any great calamity, or the apprehension of any national judgment, to proclaim a fast. To conceal her design against Naboth, Jezebel orders such a fast to be observed. By this means she intimated that there was some accursed thing or person among them, which was ready to bring down the vengeance of God upon their city—something which they should inquire out and effectually remove. These days being employed in punishing offenders, doing justice and imploring pardon of God, a fair opportunity was afforded the elders for calling an assembly of the people and bringing forward the false witnesses to accuse Naboth.

These nobles and elders knew Na-

both to be innocent, but they were doubtless men of such character as Jezebel well knew would be willing to carry out her murderous plot. She knew her men, and selected the right kind of instruments.

The day on which the fast is appointed arrives. The people, ignorant of the plot going forward, convene at the appointed place. An air of mystery hangs over the whole affair, and every one is wondering what is to be brought to light. Naboth is seized and placed in a conspicuous position before the multitude, as a criminal. Two bribed villains come forward as his accusers, and calling on the God of truth as a witness of their lie, they testify that Naboth has been guilty of blasphemy against God, and treason against the king. Without giving him either time or opportunity to clear himself of the

charge, his infamous judges pass sentence upon him and hurry him away to execution. But lest the estate should not be secured to Ahab, and the sons of Naboth should be left to claim the property of their murdered father, they are hurried forth and slain also. (See 2 Kings ix, 25.) A message is now sent to Jezebel, informing her that the plot has been executed—that Naboth is stoned and is dead.

When Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned and was dead, she said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead.” What a message this for a *woman* to bear to her husband. In the female character we look for all that is mild, affectionate, and tender. We expect females to be the friends

of the afflicted and oppressed—to see them weep over scenes of distress, and shudder at the bare recital of deeds of blood. And generally we are not disappointed. If any one has a tear to shed over suffering humanity, if any one has a tongue to plead the cause of justice, if any heart is the abode of sympathy, it is usually *woman's*. But when a woman becomes shameless and abandoned, when she once gives herself up to work wickedness, she is the most dreaded, fiendish being in existence. Fierce and cruel as a bear robbed of her whelps, like Herodias, she can feast her eyes on the bloody head of a murdered prophet, or like Jezebel, she can exult in reporting herself a murderer.

And what shall we say of Ahab? Unlike Jezebel, he had been brought up in the midst of a religious people

who knew God. We cannot suppose he was unacquainted with the law. God had sent his prophets to instruct him, punished him with judgments, and wrought miracles before his eyes. Yet after all this, we find him allowing his wicked queen to use his name, seal, and authority, to murder an innocent and virtuous subject. And now, when the tidings arrive that Naboth is dead, he rises up and goes down to take possession of his vineyard. Surely there should be a place of punishment for such wretches as Ahab and Jezebel.

Ahab is now in the vineyard of Naboth. Here are the vines running upon the wall and climbing the trees—trained by the hand of Naboth. There is the wine-press and various implements which he had used. Here the arbours under which he had refreshed himself. Ahab looks about







him, feasting his eyes on his newly acquired possessions. All obstacles are now removed to his laying out his gardens as he pleases. Naboth is dead, and can no longer mortify his pride, nor refuse to gratify his desires. He is perhaps thinking of commencing his garden of flowers, and about to give orders to his gardeners to remove the vines planted by Naboth. But suddenly he hears the sound of footsteps. He starts—has the murdered ghost of Naboth come to haunt the murderer? He turns about and meets the withering glance of the eye of the prophet Elijah. His heart sickens and trembles within him. But summoning up his sinking courage, and assuming a tone and aspect little accordant with his real feelings, he cries out, “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” Elijah answers, “I have found thee, because thou hast sold

thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Hast thou killed and also taken possession? Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every son. I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Elijah, whose posterity were killed, and from whom the kingdom was taken away because of their great wickedness. Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And of Jezebel God hath declared the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. And him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat, and him that dieth in the fields shall be eaten by the fowls of the air"—vultures and other ravenous birds.

This dreadful sentence was pronounced upon Ahab for his great wickedness, which far exceeded that of the most wicked kings which had reigned before him. For it is added, after the prediction of Elijah, that "there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." Ahab's children were included in the sentence, because God saw that they would follow the example of their sinful parents. Children need not be wicked because their parents are, especially in religious communities, where they have many opportunities of learning better; but very generally they are. I hope, therefore, if any of my young readers have pious parents, they will learn to prize such a blessing; that they will daily thank God in their prayers that they were not

cursed with such parents as wicked Ahab and Jezebel.

When Ahab heard the words of Elijah, he was shocked at the message, and for a moment his stubborn heart trembled, for he rent his clothes and put on a garment of sackcloth, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly or sorrowfully. But his repentance, though true, was imperfect; and his sorrow, though sincere, was of no long continuance. If he was driven in terror to his knees, and for a time wore the garb of penitence, yet his sorrow seems to have been too much because of the coming calamities, and too little because of his sins. Still, God, who is always long-suffering, and unwilling that any should perish, was pleased to grant him a short reprieve. And God said to Elijah, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? be-

cause he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days I will bring the evil upon his house."

---

## CHAPTER V.

Ahab forgets his penitence—Plans an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth Gilead—Goes contrary to the advice of Micaiah the prophet—Is slain—Dogs lick his blood according to Elijah's prediction—Ahaziah succeeds to the kingdom—His character—Falls through the lattice and is wounded—Sends to consult the god of Ekron—Elijah meets the messengers and tells them the king must die—Ahaziah, enraged, sends an armed band to seize the prophet—Fire falls from heaven and consumes them—A second band destroyed—Elijah goes with the third company and announces to Ahaziah his death—He dies, and his brother Joram reigns over Israel.

Three years had now passed away since Ahab's last war with Benhadad king of Syria, and considerable time had elapsed since the prophet had delivered his alarming message. Ahab had forgotten his penitence ;

and because judgment was not speedily executed for his evil work, his heart was still set in him to do evil." Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, had formed a connection with Ahab's family by marrying his son to Ahab's daughter, and was now on a visit at Samaria. Ahab supposed this would be a favourable time to recover Ramoth Gilead, which had formerly belonged to Israel, but was now in possession of the Syrians. And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat said he was willing to go, but wished Ahab first to inquire of the Lord whether he would go with them and prosper them. But Ahab, instead of inquiring of the Lord, gathered together the idolatrous prophets. These were probably Jezebel's four hundred prophets of the grove that were not present, and of

course escaped when the prophets of Baal were slain. These lying prophets, knowing Ahab wished to go, and always ready to flatter, said, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into thy hand." Jehoshaphat, being not at all satisfied with these pretenders, inquires, "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah, that we might inquire of him?" Ahab replies, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Jehoshaphat gently reproved him, saying, "Let not the king say so."

When Micaiah came, he first spoke ironically, and using the words of the false prophets, said, "Go up and prosper." But the king perceiving it, said, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but what is

true in the name of the Lord?" Then Micaiah told him that God had permitted a lying spirit to take possession of his four hundred prophets; that the Lord had spoken evil concerning him, and that instead of going up against Ramoth Gilead, every man ought to return to his house. When Ahab heard this, his anger kindled against Micaiah, and he commanded him to be put in prison, and "fed with bread of affliction and water of affliction until he came again in peace." And Micaiah said, "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me." And calling on the people to mark his prediction, he said, "Hearken, O people, every one of you." Ahab, being determined to go, did not regard the command of God; and Jehosaphat, rather than displease him, sinfully yielded and went with him. For this he was near losing



his life, and was afterward severely rebuked by a prophet of the Lord in Jerusalem. But being on the whole a good and virtuous king, God was pleased to spare and pardon him. But Ahab, who had taken the precaution of going into the battle in disguise, was shot by an arrow from one of the Syrian archers. On receiving his wound, he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded." But lest his soldiers should be discouraged, he was held up in his chariot by his servants through the day, while the blood continued flowing from his wound, and at evening he died. As the prophet had predicted, the battle went against him—he did not prosper; and at evening a retreat was ordered. Ahab was carried to Samaria, and buried. The "chariot was washed in the pool

of Samaria, and dogs licked up his blood," as Elijah had foretold.

Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, was the next king of Israel. Like his father Ahab, he was under the influence of Jezebel his mother, who still lived. He proved a most wicked king, for "he served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done."

Ahaziah had reigned but a short time when he met with a serious accident. The roofs of eastern houses were flat, and were used as a promenade, or place to walk and enjoy the cool of the day. Ahaziah was walking or standing on the roof of his palace, when the wooden lattice gave way and he fell through. He was severely wounded, and fearing he should not recover, he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the

god of Ekron whether he should recover or not. Baal-zebub means the *god of flies*. It is supposed he was so called by his worshippers because they considered him their defender against those troublesome insects. In Abyssinia Mr. Bruce tells us there is a species of large buzzing fly which is a terrible scourge to man and beast. "As soon as this plague appears," says he, "and their buzzing is heard, the cattle forsake their food and run wildly about the plain, and die worn out with fright, fatigue, and hunger. The camel, emphatically called by the Arabs the ship of the desert, though his size is as immense as his strength, and his body covered with a thick skin, defended with strong hair, still is not able to sustain the violent punctures made by this fly with his pointed proboscis. He must lose no time in removing from the

place where these creatures breed to the sands of Atraba, for when once attacked, his body, head, and legs break out into large bosses, which swell, break, and putrefy, to the certain destruction of the creature." This same species of fly probably infested Ekron and the neighbouring parts, which led the superstitious pagans to seek in this idol a protecting god. Baal-zebub is supposed also to have been regarded as the *god of medicine*. Hence Ahaziah sent his messengers to inquire of him. There were priests or priestesses who lived in the temples of the various idols, who pretended to receive the answers of the god for the benefit of the inquirer. Some suppose that idol worship being just such as pleased evil spirits, they were concerned in giving answers to the priests. Others think the priests being supported by the gifts of those who came

to inquire, and, of course, deeply interested in keeping up the credit of their gods, gave the answers themselves. At all events, these answers were usually of a character well worthy of proceeding from the "*father of lies*," or some of his followers. They were so worded as to mean either the one thing or the other. Thus, when Crœsus, the Lydian monarch, was contemplating a battle with Cyrus, and inquired of a pagan idol or oracle, if he should succeed, he received for answer, "If Crœsus cross the Halys, he will overthrow a great empire." This would have been true, whether he conquered or was conquered; for, if he conquered Cyrus, he overthrew the Assyrian empire; and, if he was beaten, he overthrew his own.

That even the pagans should deceive themselves with such childish

trickery is surprising, but much more so that an Israelite like Ahaziah should be thus deceived. He knew the Prophet Elijah, and other prophets of the true God were in the land. He knew they uttered predictions that never failed. But probably he could say, like his father Ahab, "I hate them, for they do not prophesy good of me, but evil." He also knew that by his idolatries he had forfeited the favour of Jehovah, and perhaps supposed he would not answer his inquiries. He chose, therefore, to send to Baal-zebub, the idol of the Philistines. While his messengers were on their way, God told Elijah to go and meet them, and say unto them, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from

that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.”

Overawed by the presence of such a venerable man, who spake to them with such authority in the name of the Lord, these messengers returned. And the king said unto them, “Why are ye now turned back?” They answered, “There came a man to meet us and said unto us, Go, turn again to the king that sent you, and say unto him, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god Ekron? Therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.” Ahaziah asked what kind of a man he was that met them and told them these words, and when they had described him, he said, “It is Elijah, the Tishbite.” Ahaziah had already shown himself a very obstinate sinner.

For though so dangerously sick as to be constantly in fear of death, and though he knew what dreadful judgments had fallen upon his father for his idolatry, he still persisted in defying the true God. Instead of repenting of his sins, he was sending to consult the idol-god of Ekron. And now that God had rebuked him by the mouth of his Prophet Elijah, instead of becoming penitent, he becomes furious, and sends a band of fifty soldiers to seize Elijah. He, no doubt, intended to murder him.

The captain, with his fifty soldiers, marched in search of Elijah, and found him sitting upon the top of a hill. When they saw him, the officer called out and said, "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down." These men were probably of the same spirit with their master. He wishes to get the prophet in his power, and



they are quite willing to execute his wicked purpose—to seize and deliver him. The very manner in which they addressed him was insolent and contemptuous. If he refused to come, they were, doubtless, ready to carry him by force. The reply of Elijah implies that they styled him *a man of God*, in derision. For he said, “*If I be a man of God*, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty.” God saw the murderous purpose of their hearts, and felt the insult which was offered to him by this attempt upon the life of his prophet, and inspired Elijah to utter this solemn prediction of their overthrow. Immediately fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

The king, madly fired with revenge and unawed by the fearful fate of his first company, sends a second captain

with his fifty. We should suppose these would have been sufficiently warned by the fate of the others, to refuse to go on so wicked and dangerous an errand. But they went, and accosted the prophet in the same insolent strain as the former company.

Elijah, inspired as before, replied, "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." Instantly the fire fell upon them, and they were no more.

An awful warning this to the wicked king and an idolatrous people!

Again the king sent another captain and his fifty. It would appear that he did not alter his purpose, even now, for he sent another *armed band*. If he had sent a single person, not to force, but to invite the prophet to come, we might suppose the destruction of his one hundred soldiers had

taught him a little wisdom, if it had not brought him to repentance. The captain of this company came, however, in a very different spirit from the others. For "he went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him and said unto him, "O man of God, I pray thee, let my life and the life of these fifty, thy servants, be precious in thy sight. Behold there came fire down from heaven and burned up the two captains of the former fifties, therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight."

And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, "Go down with him, be not afraid of him." And he arose and went down with him to the king. And Elijah said unto Ahaziah, "Thus saith the Lord, Inasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to

inquire of his word? Therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die."

Either the destruction of the two companies of soldiers so far intimidated the king that, though he persisted in sending for the prophet, he yet dared not offer him violence; or if he intended it, God restrained him, so that he could not. Whatever might now be his fears or his hopes, Elijah delivered his short, but pointed and fearful message, in the same manner he had delivered it to his servants. As Elijah had predicted, Ahaziah soon died, and Jehoram, his brother, succeeded him as king of Israel.

## CHAPTER VI.

Elijah about to leave the world—God sets the seal of his approbation to his servant's fidelity, by translating him to heaven without seeing death—Other reasons for his translation—Visits the schools of the prophets—Divides the waters of the Jordan—His spirit descends on Elisha—Ascends to heaven in a fiery chariot—Visits the earth once more in company with Moses, after an absence of nine hundred years—Reascends to heaven.

ELIJAH had now nearly finished his work on earth. His sorrows, toils, and persecutions were almost at an end. In great mercy to Israel, God had selected a man of a like spirit to be his successor. This man, having been with Elijah for a considerable time, had profited by his counsels and instructions. He had witnessed his faith, his patience, and his love to Israel. He had caught a large portion of his zeal and intrepidity, and had become well qualified to succeed Elijah in carrying on the great

work of reformation. Elijah felt great satisfaction in leaving the work in the hands of such a successor as Elisha.

But God intended not only to furnish instruments to carry forward his work, but he also designed to make Elijah's departure from this world as great a blessing to his true worshippers as his life had been. For this purpose, he had resolved that Elijah should not die, but be translated, soul and body, to heaven. This would serve several useful purposes. First, it would convince both the friends and the enemies of true religion that those who trust in God have nothing to fear. Here was the very man who had been hated and persecuted by Ahab, Jezebel, and Ahaziah—whose life they had sought, with the power of the kingdom at their disposal. Here was the man over whose head the storm

of vengeance had so often gathered, for whom those who "bowed not the knee to Baal" had often trembled and prayed, so far from falling a victim to his merciless persecutors, that while dogs have licked the blood of Ahab, he is about to leave the world in triumph, without sharing the common lot of even good men. How must this encourage Elisha and the other prophets, with all that rejoiced in the progress of reformation! How would it encourage them to go forward in the name of Elijah's God against idolatry! And how must it have disheartened Elijah's persecutors, and those who were endeavouring to destroy the worship of Jehovah, by promoting idolatry!

Secondly, God intended to impress on the minds of the people of Israel, and all coming generations, the doctrine of a *future existence*—of an ex-

istence of the *body*, as well as the soul. He had already given the men of a former wicked generation a proof of this doctrine, in the translation of Enoch. But it had been neglected, and he therefore intended to revive it. And while he thus set the seal of his approbation to the conduct of the man who had so nobly stood up in defence of religion, in a time of general wickedness, God also, in mercy to the world, left them an evidence of a future state to strengthen their faith and confirm their hopes.

Thirdly, It was intended to give countenance and support to the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which makes so prominent a part of the preaching of Christ and his apostles ; for though Elijah was not raised, but changed like one of those who shall be alive at the time of the general resurrection, whose



bodies shall be changed from mortal to immortal, and from weakness to power, yet his translation is a proof of God's power and intention to give our bodies a future life. All these great ends God no doubt had in view, so that Elijah was translated for the sake of others, quite as much as on his own account. We, and all others to the end of time, have reason to thank God for this great event.

But to return to Elijah. He had now received the intelligence of what God was about to do. But, before he is translated, he must go to Bethel, and visit the "school of the prophets" in that place. To see this holy and venerable prophet once more would be a great satisfaction to the pious young men there. Elijah probably wished to leave them a faithful charge to be firm and undaunted in the cause of God. This charge would be

doubly impressive on account of its being his last.

Before Elijah set out, he said to Elisha, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." He wished, perhaps, to give Elisha an opportunity of showing the strength of his attachment. But Elisha prized his company and last counsels too highly to be willing to give them up, and he said, "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So they went down to Bethel. This was the place where Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, the first idolatrous king of Israel, had set up one of his golden calves. In this very seat of idol-worship, Elijah had succeeded in establishing a school of piety for young ministers of the true religion. This was also the place where Jacob lodged when he left his father's house and journeyed toward the country

where his mother's brethren resided. It was in this place that he repented of his sins, and where he saw a vision of angels—where he promised to take the Lord for his God. It was Jacob who first gave it the name of Bethel, which signifies the house of God.

When they drew near to Bethel, the young prophets came out to meet them. They had learned that Elijah was to be taken away, and came to see him for the last time. And they said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And he answered, "Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace." He felt deeply solemn, and did not wish them to break in upon his meditations. He knew it was God's will, and wished both them and himself to yield in quiet submission. After Elijah had bid adieu to the prophets at Bethel, he said to Elisha,

“Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho.” But Elisha replied, “As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” So they came to Jericho. This was the first city in Canaan taken by Joshua. It was at that time surrounded with strong walls, around which the Israelites were commanded by God to march seven days. This they did once a day, probably keeping at a sufficient distance from the walls to avoid the arrows of their enemies. On the seventh they uttered a loud shout, when God caused the walls to fall down, and delivered the city into their hands. Moses calls Jericho the city of palm trees. Josephus says balsam trees also grew here. Here also was a school of the prophets. It was indeed an admirable place for such a school. Its history would remind the young men of

the God of miracles, and its natural beauty would lead them to admire the God of nature.

The prophets of Jericho had also learned of Elijah's approaching departure, and they too addressed Elisha as did the prophets of Bethel, and received a like reply. Elijah, I suppose, left his last charge with these prophets. Having here finished his work, he said again to Elisha, "Tarry, I pray thee, here, for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan." Elisha still refused to leave him, and they went on together to Jordan. As they went, fifty men of the sons of the prophets followed them at a distance, that they might see whither they would go, and what would be done.

At length the waters of the Jordan were before them. At those seasons when the snows of Mount Lebanon melted under the heat of the sum-

mer's sun, and poured their numerous streams into its bosom, the Jordan was altogether impassable. It then swelled into a large and rapid river. It was probably high at this time; but Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

When they were gone over, Elijah said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken from thee." Elisha's greatest desire was to do good. He knew very well what difficulties and opposition must be encountered, but he felt no disposition to shrink from the task. He only wanted a large measure of the spirit which had sustained Elijah; he therefore said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me." Elijah replied, "Thou hast

asked a hard thing, nevertheless if thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

They still walked forward, conversing together. Elisha was anxious to improve the few moments that remained in which he might enjoy the company of Elijah, and Elijah's affections, though strongly drawn toward heaven, still lingered around his beloved disciple. Perhaps they talked of the past, and what deliverances God had wrought for his servants—of Enoch, who walked with God in the midst of degenerate times, and "was not, for God took him;"—of Noah, who preached righteousness to a wicked world, and was saved in the ark, being borne in safety on the tempest-tossed waves of the deluge; that Elijah told Elisha to be strong and of good courage in carrying for-

ward the work of reform in Israel, and refreshed his memory with the deliverances God had given to him. Then they would quite naturally talk of that heaven which Elijah was about to enter—of its rest from labours, sufferings, and persecutions—of the society all pure and glorious, and of the arrival of Elisha, which would be in a very little while. In the midst of their conversation, “behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” We cannot give any very precise explanation of these words. We may suppose that a bright and radiant cloud, which, as it ascended, might appear like a *chariot and horses*, raised Elijah from the earth and wafted him to the seats of the blessed. When our Saviour ascended from Bethany, a cloud re-



ceived him. Elijah's ascension appears to have been a type of the Saviour's, and probably it was a luminous cloud which received him.

When Elisha saw Elijah departing, he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." By calling him his father, he meant that he was his guide and instructor, and dear to him as his own father. The expression, "The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof," alludes to the appearance he then saw, and seems to imply that Elijah by his counsel, prayers, and labours, did more for the preservation and defence of Israel than all their chariots and horses and other warlike preparations. All good men, but especially those of great wisdom and piety, are a defence to their country. They are far better than an army. Elisha saw Elijah no more, and in token of his

sorrow he rent his clothes. The mantle of Elijah had fallen from him as he ascended, and Elisha took it up. It was a token of his succeeding Elijah in the prophetic office, and that his spirit was to rest upon him. Elisha now went back, and stood by Jordan. The waters had returned to their place, and were rolling their dark waves before him; but he took the mantle that had fallen from his ascending companion, and said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and when he had also smitten the waters, they parted as before, and Elisha went over. When the sons of the prophets who had followed from Jericho saw this miracle, they said, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him in token that they received him, and would be subject to his instructions as

they had been to those of Elijah. And they said unto him, "Behold now there are with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master, lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley." And he said, "Ye shall not send." And when they urged him until he was ashamed he said, "Send." They sent fifty men who searched for him three days, but they found him not. They then gave over the search, and returned to Jericho, where Elisha had tarried during their absence, and he said unto them, "Did I not say unto you, Go not?"

Elijah was now in heaven with Enoch, Noah, and Moses, men who like him had toiled, wept, and suffered for the cause of God. But his predictions did not fall to the ground.

Elisha, taking up the work where he had left it, sent, according to God's commands, and had Jehu anointed to be king of Israel. Jehu immediately commenced executing the sentence which had been passed upon the family of Ahab. He met the reigning King Joram on the field of Naboth, for which Jezebel had caused his murder, where he charged him with his iniquities, and immediately shot him dead in his chariot. Passing on he rode to Jezreel, where the infamous Jezebel looked out from the palace window. On seeing her, Jehu called out to two or three persons who were with her to cast her down. They did so, and as she fell her blood was sprinkled upon the wall and the horses, and she was trodden under foot. Jehu and his party then went into the city and dined. After dinner he commanded his servants, saying, "Go

and look after this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." But when they came to the place, nothing could be found of her but the skull, the feet, and a part of the hands. The dogs, which in Palestine were despised and hated, and ran in troops about the city, and were of a wild and savage character, had eaten Jezebel. Thus was Elijah's prediction fulfilled. The house of Ahab was cut off, "and dogs eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." A sore judgment also awaited the rest of the worshippers of Baal. Elijah had warned them—God had sent a famine upon them, and wrought a striking miracle on Mount Carmel to convince them of their folly and turn them to his worship; but many of them would not repent, and now the day of their calamity had come. Jehu had sent and commanded them all to

come together in one grand assembly. They supposed he was intending to have a great festival in honour of Baal; but when they were all assembled, he ordered his soldiers to cut them all off at a stroke. Thus perished these miserable idolators.

Israel did not, however, entirely forsake idolatry, and God finally, after many years' forbearance, gave them into the hands of their enemies, who carried them from their country and made them slaves. Judah also fell into idolatry. God sent them many prophets, and bore long with them; but they were finally cured of this sin by a seventy years' captivity in Babylon, after which many returned from both kingdoms, and united in one nation. They fell into many other sins after their return, but never again into idolatry. Thus the work of overthrowing idolatry, in which

Elijah had acted so prominent a part, was completed.

We hear once more of Elijah after his ascension. About nine hundred years had rolled away since he left the land of Israel; Elisha had finished his earthly pilgrimage, and had joined him. Many pious Israelites, the fruits of their united labours, they had been permitted to welcome into the "everlasting habitation." The glories of heaven had been opening upon them, and angels and glorified spirits had been their companions. The wicked had long since ceased from troubling, and their weary souls had been at rest. The Saviour had left the courts of bliss, and gone down to those very mountains and plains where Elijah had so often been. Here he had wrought miracles; but they were all miracles of mercy. He had opened the eyes of the blind, un-

stopped the ears of the deaf, and restored the dead to life. He had healed all manner of sickness and diseases. He was now about to suffer, that he might atone for the sins of men—to lay down his life, “that whosoever believed on him might not perish but have *everlasting* life.” To comfort his sorrowing disciples, to whom he had made known his approaching sufferings and departure—to confirm their faith in him as the Messiah—to establish them in the belief of a future existence, Jesus took Peter, and James, and John, and ascended into a high mountain. While he prayed, his face became bright as the sun, his raiment white as the light. And there appeared two heavenly beings talking with him; these were Moses and Elijah, the giver and the restorer of the law. They conversed with the Saviour



about his approaching sufferings and death—not to give, but to receive instruction. This high privilege was probably conferred on these two holy men, because they had been among the chief instruments of promoting the cause of religion in the world. They appeared in their glory to encourage the apostles who had before them a host of difficulties and persecutions. When they afterward thought of these holy men they would think of their former labours and sufferings, and of their present glory; and they would look forward to such a glory as their own great reward. They were also about to commence preaching the great doctrine of the resurrection, and here they had a specimen of the glory of the resurrection body.

Overjoyed at what he saw and felt, Peter said, “ Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here

three tabernacles ; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." As he spoke these words, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, and said, "Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man. The chariot of the Lord had received Elijah the second time, and borne him to the abodes of the blessed, where he waited to hail the arrival of the Saviour, and welcome Peter, and James, and John when their work should be done and their warfare accomplished.

AUG 18 1947

THE END.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: May 2005

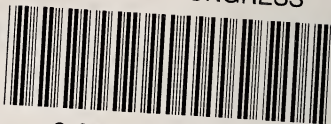
**PreservationTechnologies**

**A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION**

111 Thomson Park Drive  
Cranberry Township, PA 16066  
(724) 779-2111



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 169 907 6

